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5 March 1996

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COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 220th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 26 February 1996, at 10.30 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. BOUTROS-GHALI
(Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Chairman: Mr. CISSÉ (Senegal)

CONTENTS

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT OBSERVER FOR PALESTINE

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

OTHER MATTERS

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

2. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN noted that although the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Cissé, had been appointed to another post, it was his understanding that the Committee wished to maintain the current composition of the Bureau pending the arrival of Mr. Cissé's successor. He took it that the Committee approved the procedure.

3. It was so decided.

4. Mr. Cissé (Senegal) took the chair.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

5. The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that the General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, had reaffirmed the mandate from which the Committee derived. In recent years, there had been historic developments in the Middle East and, in the past few months, the peace process had continued to advance. There had been some setbacks, but, by and large, the vision enshrined in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993, had been sustained. Both parties had demonstrated their commitment to the principles and provisions of the agreements signed by them and, equally importantly, to the implementation of those agreements. Both had accepted negotiation as the means of resolving their political differences and had persevered in their efforts to that end. He was encouraged by such evidence of responsiveness and responsibility.

6. He had welcomed the signing on 28 September 1995, in Washington, D.C., of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which represented an important step towards full implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The timely withdrawal of Israeli troops and the successful holding of Palestinian elections had been further crucial milestones along that road. It was his hope that those achievements would encourage progress in the next important and delicate stage of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, which were due to start in May, as well as on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks of the Middle East peace process, enabling the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

7. Sadly, the world had lost one of the great contributors to the peace process. Yitzhak Rabin had proved himself truly to be both a national leader and an international statesman. He paid tribute to the memory of Mr. Rabin, whom he had been privileged to count as a personal friend, and reaffirmed the resolve of the United Nations to pursue with vigilance the ideal of regional peace for which Mr. Rabin had worked to the very end.

8. The security situation in the region remained a cause for concern. Over the past year, he had had, on several occasions, to condemn acts of violence which were clearly attempts at derailing the peace process. The latest such attempt had been made the previous day. How many more innocent people would have to die and suffer before peace was achieved in the region? Extremism from any quarter must be curbed. There could be no more effective way of doing so than by ensuring that the negotiations continued and that the tangible benefits deriving from the agreements were apparent and accessible to all.

9. It was essential to deal with the economic instability and to improve the poor living conditions which persisted, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The transition to Palestinian self-rule must be accompanied by economic and social development which would provide a sure foundation for a lasting peace. The programmes and agencies of the United Nations system would continue to provide all possible expertise and assistance in that respect. Mr. Peter Hansen, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, had recently been designated Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. He was confident that Mr. Hansen would continue and build upon the work of his distinguished predecessor, Mr. Ilter Türkmen.

10. He himself placed the greatest possible emphasis on sustainable economic and social development in the occupied territories. Accordingly, the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Mr. Terje Rod Larsen, had continued to guide and support the activities of United Nations programmes and agencies; they included the facilitation of public works projects to create immediate employment opportunities in the Gaza Strip. In addition, a coordination mechanism had been established to ensure effective disbursement of donor funds. Training and other assistance was being coordinated for the Palestinian police. The committed efforts of the international community were gradually beginning to bear fruit, particularly in the areas of institution-building and infrastructure development.

11. In conclusion, he expressed his appreciation for the continuing efforts of the Committee in pursuit of a just peace in the Middle East. He was grateful to the Committee for recognizing the need for flexibility in the use of resources. Regrettably, due to the recent further exacerbation of the Organization's financial crisis he was obliged to urge the Committee once again to exercise restraint and economy in the year to come.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

12. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as representative of Senegal, said that it had been his good fortune to take up his post as his country's permanent representative to the United Nations at a turning-point in the Organization's history, as the end of the cold war was opening the way for greater realism in international relations. No one, however, could have foreseen the dramatic progress in the situation in the Middle East.

13. The Palestinian problem was the root cause of the poor relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours. The Committee's mandate to safeguard the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people had therefore placed it at the

heart of the Middle East conflict. In fulfilment of its mandate, the Committee had acted resolutely yet objectively and had condemned all violations of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Contrary to the views of certain delegations, the Committee had never shown any bias in its evaluation of the Palestinian problem.

14. The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 13 September 1993 had been a historic development which had profoundly changed the situation. Accordingly, the Committee had undertaken a review of its own aims and methods. It had adapted its programme of work to the new realities and needs and, in view of the financial crisis, had scaled back its activities. In the interest of preserving the Committee's efficiency it was important that no staff cuts should be made in the Division for Palestinian Rights and that the funding for its database should be increased. At the same time, however, the Committee Bureau and the Division must continue to rationalize their activities.

15. Looking to the future, he said that, whatever the obstacles along the road, there was no doubt that the peace process had become irreversible. While the election of Yasser Arafat as president of the Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority and the creation of an elected assembly were particularly encouraging signs, it should not be assumed that the Committee no longer had a role to play. The Committee's mandate was to identify and condemn all violations of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Regrettably, such violations continued to occur. He was confident that the Secretary-General, who had been unstinting in his efforts in support of the peace process, would ensure that the Committee was able to continue its vital work.

16. In conclusion, he thanked everyone, particularly the Permanent Observer for Palestine, for their assistance throughout his tenure as chairman of the Committee.

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT OBSERVER FOR PALESTINE

17. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that the United Nations would continue to have a responsibility towards Palestine until all the issues within the Committee's remit had been completely resolved.

18. The redeployment of Israeli forces in the West Bank and the Palestinian elections, which had been characterized by high voter participation, integrity and transparency, were two particularly important developments. At the same time, however, he pointed out that there was as yet no guarantee of safe passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, that persons who had been displaced since 1967 had yet to be allowed to return home and that the Gaza Strip and West Bank were still being isolated from the outside world.

19. Negotiations between Palestine and Israel should proceed in accordance with the agreed time-frame, and a new and faster pace should be established for the peace process involving greater cooperation by the Israelis, a fresh approach to the economic issue, more efforts on the part of donor countries, and greater participation by United Nations bodies.

20. The Palestinian position on the most recent terrorist outrage and all previous attacks was one of condemnation and total rejection of all acts of violence. He again appealed for an end to all terrorist acts, including political assassination.

21. On the matter of the financial crisis affecting the United Nations, he hoped that the Observer Mission would take the Secretary-General's appeals for greater efficiency into account, but stressed that a minimum level of functions was essential to fulfil the mandate stipulated by the General Assembly.

22. Concerning the future work of the Committee, he regretted the comments made by the representative of the United States in connection with the enhancement of the effectiveness of the work of the Organization. The latter's criticisms of the Committee betrayed a hostile position at odds with the tangible political developments which had taken place in the Middle East. He believed that all sides should be prepared to change their views to take account of such developments, and in rejecting the criticisms, he trusted that the United States Government would display a more positive attitude towards cooperating with the Committee and accepting the role which the United Nations had played in building peace in the region.

The meeting was suspended at 11.54 a.m. and resumed at 11.55 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

23. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would need to consider what activities it wished to undertake in 1996. The Bureau had prepared a draft programme of work for the year which would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

OTHER MATTERS

24. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan), supported by Mr. AWAAD (Observer for Egypt), Mr. ZLENKO (Ukraine), Mr. BALZAN (Malta), Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana) and Mr. SHAMI (Pakistan), paid tribute to the outgoing Chairman for his valuable work.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

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23 August 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE
RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 221st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 7 May 1996, at 3 p.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan)

Chairman: Mr. KA (Senegal)

CONTENTS

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 1996

UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, CAIRO,
21-23 MAY 1996

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CONTENTS (continued)

UNITED NATIONS NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, 24-26 JUNE 1996

APPLICATIONS BY NEW NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR ACCREDITATION WITH THE COMMITTEE

OTHER MATTERS

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

2. Mr. AMARI (Tunisia) nominated Mr. Ka (Senegal) for the office of Chairman, Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan) and Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) for re-election to the Office of Vice-Chairman, and Mr. Cassar (Malta) for re-election to the Office of Rapporteur.

3. The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN said that if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to elect as officers the candidates nominated by the representative of Tunisia.

4. It was so decided.

5. Mr. Ka (Senegal) took the Chair.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

6. The CHAIRMAN said that greater determination and vigilance were currently required to ensure that the Palestinian people would one day exercise their inalienable rights and that a just and lasting peace would be established in the Middle East. In strengthening the actions of the United Nations on behalf of the economic and social development of Palestinian territories, the Secretary-General had made an inestimable contribution to the consolidation of peace. A major seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people was to be held in Cairo within a few days. President Arafat's recent visit to the United States of America and his appearance at the United Nations illustrated the importance of that seminar and all other initiatives aimed at helping the Palestinian people rehabilitate its infrastructure and enhance its national capabilities. The Committee would work closely with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to strengthen its working relations with all United Nations bodies, Member States and non-governmental organizations concerned with the Palestinian question.

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 1996 (A/AC.183/1996/CRP.1)

7. Mr. CASSAR (Malta), Rapporteur, introduced the draft programme of work of the Committee for 1996 (A/AC.183/1996/CRP.1), which the officers had drawn up after giving considerable thought to the contribution to be made by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights at the current stage of the ongoing peace process towards the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

8. Paragraphs 1 to 6 of the draft programme summarized the mandates given by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session to the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information. Paragraphs 7 to 11

outlined the priority issues for 1996, namely, efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the effective implementation of the agreements reached between the parties, and the mobilization of international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period. Paragraphs 12 to 16 dealt with the proposed activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights. It was recommended, among other things, that the Committee should continue to monitor the situation on the ground and draw urgent developments to the attention of the international community. It should also continue to participate in important international meetings, as necessary, and undertake a number of new activities to expand contacts with the Palestinian Authority and other institutions, including non-governmental organizations, in the areas under its jurisdiction.

9. Paragraphs 17 to 20 dealt in detail with the programme of seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations, and indicated a number of adjustments to be made to that programme. Paragraphs 21 to 28 dealt with research, monitoring and publications, including the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL). In that area, the Committee would continue to attach importance to the contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a centre for research, monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine. It also requested the Division to continue its programme of publications and to develop UNISPAL further, in consultation with the Committee. With regard to the request contained in paragraph 28, the Division had established a public access replica and was studying various alternatives for posting documents on the Internet. However, the availability of the necessary resources for the further development of UNISPAL remained a concern.

10. Paragraphs 29 and 30 related to the observance in 1996 of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. A special programme was planned which would include an exhibit to be displayed at United Nations Headquarters from 29 November to 5 December 1996.

11. As it might sometimes be necessary for certain issues to be considered by the Committee's open-ended Working Group, he proposed that the Working Group should be re-established in accordance with past practice.

12. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft programme of work of the Committee for 1996 and that, on the basis of the recommendation of the Rapporteur, it wished to re-establish the open-ended Working Group.

13. It was so decided.

UNITED NATIONS SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, CAIRO, 21-23 MAY 1996

14. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the provisional programme contained in working paper No. 1 and said he would take it that the Committee wished to approve it.

15. It was so decided.

16. Mr. ABDERAHMAN (Observer for Egypt) said that the convening of such an important seminar, and the fact that it would deal with questions pertaining to the development of the Palestinian economy, was a testimony to the Committee's vital role in helping to mobilize assistance for the Palestinian people during the transition to national independence and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. The fact that the Committee's role had increased following the initiation of the peace process should be enough to silence those who had predicted the decline of such role.

17. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee's delegation to the seminar would be composed of the Vice-Chairman, the Rapporteur, the Permanent Observer for Palestine and himself.

UNITED NATIONS NORTH AMERICAN NGO SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE, 24-26 JUNE 1996

18. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the provisional programme for the symposium contained in working paper No. 2, which had been prepared by the officers of the Committee in consultation with the North American Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine. He took it that the Committee wished to approve it.

19. It was so decided.

APPLICATIONS BY NEW NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR ACCREDITATION WITH THE COMMITTEE

20. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to working paper No. 3, on applications by new non-governmental organizations for accreditation with the Committee. All the organizations on the list had been recommended by the regional coordinating committees for accreditation with the Committee. Furthermore, all the requests had been screened by the officers. Approval of those applications would enable the non-governmental organizations concerned to participate in a more dynamic manner in the events organized by the Committee.

21. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the requests for accreditation contained in working paper No. 3.

22. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

23. Mr. AL-KIDWA (Observer for Palestine) said that some of the important changes made to the Committee's traditional programme of work would enhance the Committee's work and enable it to make optimum use of available resources. He thanked the Government of Egypt for hosting the economic seminar which, he was confident, would achieve a number of positive results.

24. The recent visit by President Arafat to the United Nations reflected Palestine's firm commitment to the work of the United Nations and to enhancing

the Organization's role in the Middle East peace process. It also reflected the appreciation of Palestinians for the political stance taken by the United Nations in support of the Palestinian people. In April 1996, the Palestinian National Council had adopted a special resolution on the United Nations in which it had stressed that the Organization and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People should continue their work until all aspects of the Palestinian question were resolved. At the same time the Palestinian National Council had also eliminated those provisions of the Palestine National Charter which were contradictory to the contents of letters exchanged between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel in September 1993. Lastly, final status negotiations between the parties had begun on 5 May 1996 in Egypt.

25. Those positive steps by the Palestinian side had made it incumbent upon the Israeli side in turn to take several necessary steps. Such steps included: lifting the blockade on the Palestinian territories; refraining from violating the terms of the bilateral agreements including the imposition of collective punishment in violation of international humanitarian law; redeploying Israeli forces from Hebron; establishing a corridor between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip which would ensure contacts between the Palestinian territories; releasing all Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons; and pressing forward with the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Area B on the West Bank. Those steps would be consistent with Israel's undertakings, and would confirm its good faith and readiness to move forward with the peace process.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.